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Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

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* *Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play during the week of December 23, 1940.*
† *"Retreat to Pleasure" opened last Tuesday, December 17th, at the Belasco Theatre.*
† *"Cue for Passion" opened last Thursday, December 19th, at the Royale Theatre.*
† *"The Old Foolishness" opened last Friday, December 20th, at the Windsor Theatre.*

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"The Old Foolishness"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *December 21, 1940*

"The Old Foolishness" Goes Back to Love on the Heights

"The Old Foolishness," drama by Paul Vincent Carroll. Produced by John Golden at the Windsor Theatre, New York, Dec. 20, 1940.

★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

THINGS were not as they should be at the Windsor Theatre last night. The house was full of Republicans for one thing, and they are a hard group to please, as you know. Bruce Barton, Will Hays, Clarence Budington Kelland—dozens of them.

And on the stage a play written by that sometime valiant crusader for the more vital and modern Irish drama, Paul Vincent Carroll, called "The Old Foolishness."

A curiously pat title in one way, because "The Old Foolishness" strongly suggests that very thing—the old foolishness that was called free love and was fought and bled over by the drama's progressives of thirty years ago.

The free love that carried defiant souls to mountain tops and left them there, suspended between peaks of ecstasy, as it were, still searching for happiness and understanding without finding either.

In Mr. Carroll's play the free love theme is introduced by the arrival at the Sheeran farmhouse in County Down, Ireland, of Maeve McHugh. Maeve, young and rhapsodic, has been living with Francis Sheeran, a bad boy of the family, from whom she has fled.

She has come to his family to ask them to help their hunted son, not to ask sympathy for herself. She is content. She will continue her pursuit of happiness in her own way.

But there are two other Sheeran sons—one, Mike, young, poetic and eager, who would take Maeve to himself. The other, Peter, older and more prosaic, the farmer head of the house.

Peter is already affianced to Rosemaryanne, who is stodgy and stout, but he falls for the light that lies in Maeve's eyes and soon there is trouble in the Sheeran farmhouse. And more trouble when Maeve thinks she loves Peter, too. And more trouble when the church interferes.

And still more trouble when Francis comes back and Maeve, unable to choose between Francis and Peter, unable to hold them both, goes sadly out to the road with nary hat nor coat, leaving everybody pretty miserable at the last curtain.

Not for Carroll

This isn't the sort of stuff Paul Vincent Carroll, one of the most promising and most sensitive of the newer playwriting talents, should be toying with.

He should be having a shy at present day problems, social and political, or reviving the old, old problem having to do with the soul and the aspirations of men.

John Golden has given "The Old Foolishness" a handsome production and a worthy cast. Rachel Crothers has directed it hopefully, realizing, I suspect, that what is needed isn't there.

Roy Roberts gives an excellent performance as the dumbly loving Peter, and Sally O'Neil is earnestly soulful as the puzzled Maeve. Vincent Donehue does nicely as the poetic brother and Sean Dillon gives character and credibility to the bad Francis.

Walter Burke toyed enthusiastically with a light comedy role that eluded me in his fairly thick brogue and Margery Maude obliged by coming back to the stage to play an Irish mother as well as she knew how, which was pretty well.

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *December 21, 1940*

Paul Vincent Carroll's 'The Old Foolishness' Is a Story of Love in County Down of Ireland

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IF IT IS not unmannerly to say so, Paul Vincent Carroll makes a lot of trouble for himself. In "The Old Foolishness," which was acted at the Windsor last evening, he frets at love until there is no understanding him. People will get discouraged about falling in love if Mr. Carroll complicates it any further. Into a farmhouse in County Down comes a fair colleen. She has been living in sin with one of the three brothers in Dublin. The two brothers at home react to her immediately. The studious one starts mooning almost at once. The oldest one, who runs the farm, begins by being hostile. But in the end he succumbs with undying passion and needs her more than anything in the world. At one time or another she feels sweet about all three; sometimes she is even simultaneous about it. But she concludes the play by going away alone, probably for some exalted reason.

• • •

To describe the narrative as baldly as that is to do Mr. Carroll a disservice. He is a mystic writer, as we all discovered when "Shadow and Substance" appeared here. He can write beautifully of things that lie above reality. In this play he refers constantly with a kind of gentle rhapsody to things that are not known and to understanding that comes and passes like wind in the trees. It has been suggested, in fact, that "The Old Foolishness" is a symbolic play—that the girl represents Eire and the three brothers represent various aspects of Eire to which the national spirit cannot wholly surrender.

But a play written on two planes ought to be intelligible on one, as "The White Steed" was, and ought to satisfy a hunger for richness beyond the literal world. "The Old Foolishness" lacks those qualities. Whether or not Mr. Carroll is writing symbolically, the play needs some hard, realistic thinking about the common affairs of the world. Mr. Carroll is a good man and a good writer. But "The Old Foolishness" is a silly play about shapes and shadows, and it would not exist if Mr. Carroll could persuade himself to regard his characters as men and women and not as phantoms of mysticism. Although it is a considerable improvement over "Kinkred" of last season, Mr. Carroll is still chasing the will-o'-the-wisp.

• • •

In all honesty, it is not well directed or acted. Donald Oenslager's settings bulge with symbolism. The acting includes a trying combination of Irish accents and styles; and the performance is never better than a shaky imitation of the Abbey Theatre peasant school. As the domineering brother, Roy Roberts gives as straightforward a performance as one could reasonably expect of a wavering part. Sally O'Neil plays the conventional colleen with simplicity and sincerity. As the scalawag of the town, Walter Burke (with a black eye that lasts ten days) hops and scampers around like a pixie; and Guerita Donnelly plays a fat girl as though that sort of thing might develop into a career.

Laurence O'Brien's irate father has less style than the coat he wears, though just about as much style as the pants; and St. Clair Bayfield's canon is perilously on the verge of forgetting his lines. Let us be grateful at this festive season for Margery Maude's blameless portrait of a patient mother. For "The Old Foolishness" is nebulous in thought and confused in the acting. Mr. Carroll is the sort of mystical writer who needs something as coherent and forceful as the church to give him a foundation. Left to his own devices, he seems to have no body of thought to work with.

"The Old Foolishness"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *December 21, 1940*

Carroll's 'The Old Foolishness' Opens at the Windsor Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

PAUL VINCENT CARROLL has written no play from which poetic feeling is wholly absent or in which there is not, if only in flashes, a kind of spiritual warmth. This poetry and this warmth are in "The Old Foolishness," which opened last evening at the Windsor. They ameliorate, even if they do not cover, a multitude of dramatic sins. Because of them one would like to forget the windiness which blows through the play.

The story is a simple one. Mr. Carroll writes of a fine, violent girl who is loved by three Irish brothers—by a Dublin terrorist, by a poetic youth, and last by a farmer who is as stolid as an Irishman can allow himself to be. This is, at any rate in Mr. Carroll's world, not particularly stolid. Peter Sheeran can weave words with the best of them. His eloquence never falters and the most realistic matters bring from him a flood of metaphor. He is impractical as the rest, and as ready to fight the world for Maeve McHugh.

Maeve, who has been the mistress of the terrorist, comes to the quieter Sheerans in flight and Peter loves her reluctantly. Only in the moon-swept ruins of an ancient castle can he finally tell of his love, and find the recklessness to put aside his routine life, which includes lukewarm affection for a buxom dairymaid. But even in the face of his rebirth Maeve remains elusive. In the end she refuses all the brothers for reasons which, although they are fully expressed, I cannot say I precisely understand.

Several efforts have been made to enlarge this realistic tale into the realm of symbolism. According to one theory, advanced via the press department, Maeve is really Ireland and her three lovers are "the Soldier, the Scholar and the Man-of-the-Land." Mr. Carroll may, of course, have had some such notion in mind. But if he did he neglected to say so in the play. For all I can see, Maeve is merely Maeve, a girl who couldn't make up her mind. The Brothers Sheeran are just the Brothers Sheeran. The "old foolishness" is only love, and very wordy love.

'THE OLD FOOLISHNESS'

A play in three acts by Paul Vincent Carroll; supervised and directed by Rachel Crothers; settings by Donald Oenslager; presented at the Windsor Theater on December 26, 1940, by John Golden. The cast:

Mrs. Sheeran.....Margery Maude
Peter.....Roy Roberts
Mike.....Vincent Donehue
Mrs. Dorian.....Grace Francis Findlay
Dan Dorian.....Walter Burke
Maeve McHugh.....Sally O'Neil
Phelim Fitzfagan.....Laurence O'Brien
Rosemaryanne Fitzfagan.....Guerita Donnelly
The Canon.....St. Clair Bayfield
Francis.....Sean Dillon

And the words, even at their most eloquent, are as illusive as Maeve herself. Mr. Carroll says simple things with a great air of saying abstruse things. Small, rather familiar, situations are enveloped in oratory. The language is always too big for the play—too big for what is done or what is thought or what is involved. And in the last act the drama breaks completely under this load and becomes a little ludicrous. One is left feeling that Mr. Carroll has again written before he gave himself time to think.

The primary disappointment is assuaged to some extent by charm in little things. In their quieter moments all the characters are warm and real with that peculiar warmth and reality indigenous to the Irish drama. The acting is always interesting. Miss Sally O'Neil, although she notably lacks the voice for poetry, has great originality and vitality in her playing. Roy Roberts makes a substantial, moving character of Peter and Margery Maude does as much for Mrs. Sheeran. Lesser parts are, in general, well acted. But Mr. Carroll is still slipping backward from "The White Steed" and "Shadow and Substance."

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM, *December 21, 1940*

Beauty in Carroll's Latest Play

Mysticism at Work in the Old Foolishness

By SIDNEY B. WHIPPLE

THROUGH occasional passages of great beauty and through an undercurrent of twisted humor, it is easy to recognize in The Old Foolishness the hand of Paul Vincent Carroll who wrote it. Except for those distinctive marks it would be almost impossible to believe that the new play, produced this time by John Golden, was written by the author of the gripping Shadow and Substance and the delightful White Steed.

It is possible that better acting might have given more strength to Mr. Carroll's lines, and by that token it is possible that the play may read better than it sounds. But, aside from the flashes of illumination that came, here and there, the general tone of the play was dispiriting.

Mr. Carroll's theme is obvious, both in its statement and in its conclusions. From the moment Peter Sheeran, the human clod on an Irish farm, reads in his newspaper that his brother Francis, the renegade in Dublin, is a fugitive from the police because of some political conspiracy, and that Francis' mistress has been released by the police after questioning, there can be only one outcome. The mistress will make her painful way to the farm, will still the clod to life, will fall in love with Peter, and finally will renounce both Peter and Francis.

Mr. Carroll has, I think, no little scorn for the lumpish peasant he imagines Peter to be. Steady, he is, and solid and honest, a believer in Holy Church and the ordinances of the local canon, unimaginative and afraid to exercise what spiritually exists in him, a fit man to marry the farmer's fat daughter for the hundred pounds she'll bring him and the three cows and four bullocks besides. The awakening and arousing of this earth-bound creature, even-late in the play, is unbelievable.

Other mystical forces are at work, of course. Otherwise the play would be neither Carroll nor Irish. Mr. Carroll turns loose, for good or evil, a scalawag of a pixie who represents, I suppose, the spirit of freedom or the spirit of rebellion or the spirit of resentment-against-authority that runs so deep in the Irish soul. This frowzy little gnome, Dan Dorian by name, pops his head into windows to croak ill-tidings and announce impending visitations of the canon and other symbols of clerical or secular authority. He guides decent, God-fearing folk to wild places in the mountains where they forget, or become superior to, the petty conventions of the world. He interferes with their workaday complacence. He puts ideas into their heads with his blather.

Walter Burke, who played this part, seemed to regard it as a low comedy role and succeeded in giving only a bad imitation of Barry Fitzgerald. God forgive him. By excessive mugging and a superabundance of athletics, he destoyed whatever illusions Mr. Carroll intended to build up and crushed its meaning.

Roy Roberts, playing the stolid Peter, fitted more comfortably into the part and by a minimum of "acting" created a believable and interesting character. Sally O'Neil, portraying the restless, wandering, lovely mischief-maker from Dublin, was impressive in many scenes, notably in the third act climax. Laurence O'Brien and Guerita Donnelly, on the other hand, playing, respectively the characters of an irate father and his too, too solid daughter, overacted every time they were turned loose on the stage.

As a first attempt, The Old Foolishness (which seems to be Mr. Carroll's euphemism for love) would be regarded as important because it held promise. As the fourth offering of a brilliant and distinguished Irish playwright it is disappointing.

"The Old Foolishness"

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, *December 21, 1940*

Irish Sadness

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THERE is a sturdy tradition to the effect that this reviewer is partial to the Irish drama. It certainly is not my purpose to destroy so splendid a legend, but I must call your attention to the fact that a new Celtic play has reached town and that if you find any hats thrown into the air to celebrate its arrival mine will not be among them. For me there is personal melancholy in the detail that the play is not only a decidedly Irish one but that it is also the latest work of one of my favorite current Irish playwrights, Paul Vincent Carroll. It is called "The Old Foolishness," and it is filled with the graceful and picturesque trappings of the Gaelic theater, but it is so muddy, confused and unpersuasive in its narrative and its ideas that it must be set down as an additional misfortune of the week.

* * *

This time Mr. Carroll is telling the one about the beautiful girl who sets three brothers to battling for her hand. One of the brothers is a stalwart farmer, the second is a young poet and scholar and the third is a bitter revolutionary, and there are those who see in the whole thing some sort of parable about modern Ireland. The theory is, I believe, that the girl who is called Maeve is Ireland herself and that the three brothers represent the three most important manifestations of Irish life: the agriculturalist, the intellectual and the fighter. In the end Maeve discovers that she loves all of her men and that no one of them can satisfy her, so she rushes off in the last act without any of them, in something of the manner in which the romantic vagabond of Irwin Shaw's "Retreat to Pleasure" departs from that curiously similar play's heroine.

* * *

The idea that the spirit of Ireland must dart off, dissatisfied with all the aspects and the manhood of modern Eire, makes for so melancholy a parable that, if accepted, it sets down Mr. Carroll as the bitterest of his land's dismal prophets. Yet I suspect that "The Old Foolishness" suffers from so many sins of bad playwriting that its author's qualities as a seer likewise come into disrepute. There is some incidental eloquence and an occasional trace of wit and humor in the new play, but, on the whole, it is so curiously dull and lifeless, so utterly without dramatic point of pungency, that it is hard to remember that this is the work of a man who wrote those moving and beautiful plays, "The White Steed" and "Shadow and Substance." Those were works that added to the stature not only of the Irish theater but of the modern world's dramatic literature. "The Old Foolishness" has no trace of the distinctive quality of either play.

* * *

This curiously feeble and hackneyed drama is not greatly aided by the production which has been accorded it. Roy Roberts is excellent as the farmer, who is the most important of the heroine's suitors, but the other portrayals are entirely lacking in distinction. It is not that the playing is inept or incompetent. It is merely that there is a lack-luster quality about it which gives the drama an additional flatness and tends to destroy what eloquence there is in it. Donald Oenslager has designed a fine and properly eerie ruined castle for one of the scenes of love-making, but that is about all that has been done to further the mood of the narrative. Mr. Carroll has now given us two unfortunate dramas in a row after his splendid earlier contributions, and now I hope he will cease his old foolishness and give us another work worthy of himself and the Irish theater.

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *December 21, 1940*

Mr. Carroll's "The Old Foolishness" Presented

By JOHN MASON BROWN

ALTHOUGH better than "Kindred" (which is no hard thing for a play to be at all at all) "The Old Foolishness" is so far below the level of "Shadow and Substance" and "The White Steed" that one regrets to report Paul Vincent Carroll is its author. There are those, of course, who whisper (as if it helped matters) that its heroine is supposed to stand for Ireland, even as did Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

Such bifocal visionaries insist what the ever-allegorical Mr. Carroll is trying to get said, by presenting his heroine as a girl with whom three brothers in the same family fall in love, is that, like modern Ireland, she cannot make up her mind to marry the fighter, the worker of the land, or the scholar, all three of whom are types that care for her and have for her a conflicting appeal.

As dream-reading this may be true as true, or even truer. But so far as the actual merits and discernible contents of Mr. Carroll's new drama are concerned, this allegory which may have lurked in a far corner of his mind has about as little connection with what can be seen and heard at the Windsor as an airplane skywriting an advertisement for furs, has with the fox that must ultimately surrender its skin.

What comes across the footlights in the production Rachel Crothers has directed for John Golden is a bogus shamrock version of "Pelleas and Melisande" in which Golaud is called Francis, Pelleas is Peter the plowman, and another susceptible brother is this time thrown in, known, believe it or not, as Mike. The Melisande of the occasion (or the "Miss Ireland" as the more tinkling symbolists would have it) is one of those bewitched and bewitching Celtic fays who in this case is not only a warmblooded moonbeam answering to the name of Maeve McHugh but possesses a wholesale talent for captivating all the boys in one family.

All Shadow

In spite of the lilt of Mr. Carroll's Irish cadences and the occasional satisfaction of his rich metaphors, it becomes clear all-too-soon that the play he has rewritten is that very same old play we have been seeing all these many years. I mean the one in which the good older brother, who has been as virtuous as only a stage farmer can be, suddenly falls head-over-plough in love with his brother's sweetheart (here it is his brother's mistress and his brothers' sweetheart), even though the aforesaid noble bumpkin has just plighted his troth to a country maiden who has begun to resemble her churn.

The only important respect in which "The Old Foolishness" differs from its various antecedents is in its Irish accent; an accent, be it quickly reported, that is no more homogeneous at the Windsor than are the accents to be heard at any meeting of the Modern Language Association. Mr. Carroll is too gifted a writer not to release some speeches which flood the ears with music, while one is waiting for the inevitable heave-pant-and-kiss of the noble brother's surrender. Even so, the author of "The Old Foolishness" stands in grave danger of abusing the fine harp he commands by playing upon it more pretentious adages of doubtful significance than can be found on a "motto" calendar or in the collected saying of Dale Carnegie.

Mr. Oenslager's Settings

Miss Crothers' production does not help matters. Although capable in its motion, its acting is even more uncertain than are its Irish accents. Roy Roberts does a commendable job as the noble brother who is tempted. Sean Dilion is excellent as the worthless Francis. And Walter Burke contributes much by the unction of his playing of the codger who keeps sounding like an inferior "Joxer." But Vincent Donehue is an unfortunate choice for the scholar. And Sally O'Neill, a girl with fascinating eyes, becomes more and more uncertain, after a promising beginning, as the symbolical siren.

The evening's only notable feature is Donald Oenslager's settings. His background for the moonlit scene in the ruins of an ancient castle is magnificent in its poetry, its fine free use of space, and the magic of its lighting. It is a background which represents in Mr. Oenslager's career the same superlative achievement that the bridge for "Winterset" did in Mr. Mielziner's. It is a stunning setting, rich in beauty and quickening in its imagination, which deserves a far, far better play. It is the play Mr. Carroll meant to write.

"Cue for Passion"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *December 20, 1940*

'Cue for Passion,' Drama of Violent Death, Opens at the Royale

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

THERE are a good many ways of approaching violent death upon the stage, and Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft have experimented with most of them in "Cue for Passion," which opened last evening at the Royale. The authors shudder and joke, analyze motives and provide guessing games and finally end up with a surprise which is, although they may not know it, quite as illegal as their major crime. The play thus provided is certainly a full one.

It centers about the sudden death, from gunshot wound, of a disintegrating novelist who is trying his hand at acting. He is the husband of a militant publicist and a man very difficult to get along with. The authors study him in his relation to his friends and victims throughout the first act, and do it with considerable vigor and acumen. They then dispose of him behind a closed door and speculate on the identity of his assailant. This speculation occupies the second act, in regular, if not at all adroit, whodunit technic.

To make up for a certain lack of deductive progress in the second act, the authors fall back comfortably on the farce method. Having been serious and intense in the first act, they are pretty comical in the second—not uproarious, I should say, but funny enough to go on with. One then settles down to laugh through to the end, only to discover in the third act that the authors are off on an entirely new tack, drifting in the doldrums of emotional entanglements and approaching within hailing distance of the rocky shores of tragedy.

Since the authors, quite rightly, don't want their story given away, there is not much more to be said here. A shocked mystery addict may perhaps go so far as to mention that the solution is, by the established rules of the game, a fraud on the audience. Maybe the audience won't mind. A good many lively characters are introduced—a charmingly shy Belgian author, a witty play director, a young reporter and his girl, a righteous assistant district attorney and his venal superiors and a haughty general of some Latin land. The authors report on the whereabouts of all these, and more, at the crucial hour.

Since "Cue for Passion" is a hodgepodge by almost any standard, I am surprised to report further that I was sufficiently interested almost to the end. (At the very end the play just boils away.) The acting is entirely satisfactory. Gale Sondergaard is an alarming female publicist and perverter of justice; George Coulouris a convincing novelist in decline, and Ralph Locke a comically expansive theater man. More fun to watch than anybody else, however, was Oscar Karlweis, playing the part of a rabbit author for about three times what it was worth.

Oh, yes—the authors will be hurt if the central characters are identified with actual persons, living or dead. If you suspect resemblances, lay them to coincidence. Coincidence can't sue.

'CUE FOR PASSION'

A play in three acts by Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft; directed by Otto L. Preminger; settings by Herbert Andrews; presented at the Royale Theater on December 19, 1940, by Richard Aldrich and Richard Myers. The cast:

Vivienne Ames	Doris Nolan
John Michael Elliott	George Coulouris
Elsie	Clare Saunders
Bellboy	Bert Conway
Dave Herrick	Thomas Coley
Ann Bailey	Claire Niesen
Reporters	Fred Sears, Melchor Ferrer, John Neilan, Ellen Love
Photographers	Philip Faversham, Leonard Keith
Frances Chapman	Gale Sondergaard
Paul Jean Coulon	Oscar Karlweis
General Escobar	Wilton Graff
Clifford Gates	Ralph Locke
Herbert Lee Phillips	Laurin Gilbert
Marvin A. Mallet	Clay Clement
Doctor	Albert Bergh
Mr. Clark	Guy J. Sampsel
Commissioner	Edward Butler
Medical Examiner	Russell Morrison
Detectives	Edwin Gordon, Edward Forbes, Scott Moore
Harkrider	Whittier Bissell
Florist	Harold Grau
Lucie Coulon	Lili Valenty
Hughes, D. A.	Douglas Gilmore

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *December 20, 1940*

"Cue for Passion" At the Royale

By JOHN MASON BROWN

"WHAT would he do," asks Hamlet when the First Player has left him, "Had he the cue for passion That I have?" In this question is the new melodrama at the Royale best summarized, even as from it derives its title. For what Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft have done in Cock Robin terms is to fill a hotel room with people, nearly all of whom have a motive for murder. Thereafter the authors let suspicion halt on each one of these characters precisely as that rhythmic ball bounces from word to word when a song meant to be sung by a movie audience is thrown upon the screen.

It is a venerable device, heaven knows. But it remains a good one. Its age has nothing to do with its serviceability or Crime Club addicts would long ago have become disconsolate. What matters is the way in which, when employed, it manages to quicken the sleuthing instincts in those out front.

At doing this Mr. Chodorov and Mr. Kraft are fairly successful. They keep an audience guessing, even if they do not excite it. Often they cause it to laugh, too. But the major interest of their melodrama, at least for those whose reading has not stopped with "Little Orphan Annie" or "Old Mother West Wind," is bound to be centered in the merciless—really unnecessary—manner in which its central characters suggest at moments a famous novelist and the famous columnist who is his wife. In fact, "Cue for Passion" starts off by seeming so cruel a *drame a clef* that its abrupt emergence as a murder melodrama in the second act comes as a complete surprise.

Some Excellent Actors

If it is hard to judge it only on the terms it ends up by establishing, it must be remembered that any appraisal of the Laocoon group would grow in complications if the faces of the Marx brothers were suddenly to be superimposed upon its writhing figures. Quite aside from its malice or its taste, "Cue for Passion" is a moderately diverting concoction. Although not as exciting as "Kind Lady" became, it can claim the merit of spinning its spider's web in both wittier and more probable terms.

It is helped at all times by the suave emphasis of Otto L. Preminger's direction and the skill of the large cast Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Myers have assembled. Once again, but too briefly for full comfort, George Coulouris shows how able he is as an actor, though this time in a part for which he is not ideally suited. Gale Sondergaard seethes with evil and authority as the lady editor. Doris Nolan is to be seen as an actress, pretty and hard-boiled. Ralph Locke is very entertaining as a theatrical manager. But the evening's best performances are given by Claire Niesen and Oscar Karlweis. Miss Niesen is a young player of charm and genuine ability. And Mr. Karlweis is an arrival from Vienna who in a secondary role contributes one of the season's drollest character bits.

"Cue for Passion"

Reprinted from **NEW YORK DAILY NEWS**, *December 20, 1940*

Death in the Afternoon Puts An Edge on "Cue for Passion"

"Cue for Passion," drama by Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft. Produced by Richard Aldrich and Richard Myers at the Royale Theatre, New York, Dec. 19, 1940.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

I WOULDN'T know about you, but all I demand of a murder mystery is that it shall keep me interested, and a little puzzled, for the two hours of its performance. Not puzzled as to why it was produced, as many of them do, but as to who did the deed and why.

"Cue for Passion," which Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft have stitched together for the theatre, and which was shown at the Royale last night, is one of the holding sort.

I am not sure it states its reasons for the mystery either clearly or convincingly. A strong woman's determination to avoid the unpleasant publicity attending the shooting of her genius husband is well motivated in vanity, but I have an idea the police would not have given her the consideration the playwrights do.

But, passing that minor weakness, the rest is good drama and sound theatre. John Michael Elliott is a genius and a difficult person to live with. No one likes him much, and his wife, none too likable a person herself, adds a bit of professional jealousy to her mounting resentment of him.

Death in the Afternoon

On the eve of the production of a play in which he is to play the lead John Michael is found dead in his hotel room. As the playwrights see it there are a half dozen persons who might conceivably have shot him.

The wife, an influential somebody in the writing world, is determined that the best way out of the mess is for them all to conspire together to make the death appear a suicide.

They are all, including a sympathetic District Attorney, more or less agreed, except the sweetheart of a young girl who happens to have been the last person to see the dead man alive.

He will have his sweetheart cleared of suspicion or know the reason why (in a loud voice). This precipitates a couple of climaxes and builds an effective final scene, in which the sweetheart tells all.

Otto Preminger, who played the villainous consul in "Margin for Error," directed "Cue for Passion," and Preminger knows his murder plays. Happily he has been given a good cast to work with.

Good Cast

George Coulouris plays the disagreeable genius who is shot, and when Mr. Coulouris puts his mind to it he can make himself pretty disagreeable in fifteen minutes. You might not want to shoot him yourself, but you would never struggle furiously, hand to hand, to get the gun away from any one who did.

Gale Sondergaard plays the strong-minded writing lady with such force as such a lady should command. None of the ordinary feminine weaknesses are hers, and few, if any, of the feminine graces. But a good deal of actress intelligence goes into her performance.

There is one of those gifted little actresses from radio (and there are literally hundreds of them on the air) in the person of Claire Niesen, who plays the ingenue confidently and charmingly.

And an Austrian actor named Oscar Karlweiss, blessed with so definite a personality appeal and such good training, that he caught audience favor with a half dozen gestures and held it.

There are good performances by Ralph Locke, Doris Nolan, Whitner Bissell, Lauren Gilbert and several others. And a good hotel room interior by Herbert Andrews.

There have been rumors that the story of "Cue for Passion" is based on the lives of current celebrities. I see no excuse for insulting the principals *or* smearing the play's authors by crediting these rumors.

Reprinted from **NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE**, *December 20, 1940*

Death of an Author

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

IT IS the insistence of the authors of "Cue for Passion" that "no actual person living or dead is depicted or intended to be depicted in this play." Since they thereby convince every one that they did have definite people in mind for their play it may be noted that the leading characters in the new melodrama are an eminent writer, who wants to be an actor, and his wife, a celebrated woman publicist, famous for her advocacy of causes. There is a certain pretense that the eminent author is a critic, poet and composer, rather than a novelist, and the celebrated woman publicist is a publisher rather than a columnist, but that apparently is what the playrights are doing to live up to their claim that "all characters in the play are wholly imaginative and fictitious." Anyway, it is quite clear that the dramatists have a hearty dislike, bordering upon violence, for the people they are pillorying.

* * *

Of the two, it is the woman that Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft, authors of "Cue for Passion" hate the more deeply. The man, they say, is merely frustrated, bitter, beaten and outdated, but the woman is not only a hard, cruel and merciless egoist but also an unconscious Fascist. For one act, these two unpleasant and, of course, entirely imaginary and fictitious people are shown hating each other and offering the audience plenty of reasons for hating both of them. Then, just when all of us were expecting three acts of excoriation and sardonic probing into the diseased egos of the drama's two victims, "Cue for Passion" turns out to be a murder mystery melodrama. I can tell you that the author is found shot to death under mysterious circumstances, and am allowed to go no further, on the vigorous demand of the management, which fears that the pleasure of future patrons might be destroyed if their secrets were given away.

* * *

As to just how much pleasure these patrons are likely to find in such strange carryings-on, it is difficult to say. There is something extremely painful and somewhat embarrassing about the angry assault upon the two central characters made by the playwrights during the first act. The category of what can by a great process of understatement be called the shortcomings of the pilloried pair is set down with such violence that, while it does possess a certain scandalous interest, it is not pleasant to watch. Then for an act and a half a rather interesting mystery tale occupies the stage, changing the mood of the work completely but managing to add a quality of theatrical effectiveness. Finally, at the end of the third act, there is an attempt to go into a matter of social import in the contemplation of instinctive Fascists who think they are anti-Fascists. It is all slightly confusing and my final verdict is that, while the play has its inescapably interesting aspects, it is too distraught and uncertain in its conduct to be a satisfying drama.

* * *

The two bitterly denounced central characters are effectively enough played by George Coulouris and Miss Gale Sondergaard. As I have said, the playwrights dislike their male victim less than they do the female, and so, despite his unpleasant conduct, Mr. Coulouris can be less melodramatic than Miss Sondergaard. When he is killed off between the first and second acts the villainy can be managed alone by Miss Sondergaard, and she is very handsome, sultry and sinister about it. Miss Doris Nolan plays a disreputable actress from Hollywood persuasively and Ralph Locke is effective as a dishonest stage director. Almost every one in the cast is some kind of scoundrel, but there are some pleasant people, also, and they are well played. There is a humorous and sympathetic study of an exiled playwright by Oscar Karlweis, who seemed the most popular actor of the evening for the first-night audience. There is likewise an excellent ingenue performance by Miss Claire Niesen, and the juvenile is sensibly interpreted by Thomas Coley. "Cue for Passion" is an overwrought and combative melodrama that is not worried by matters of taste.

"Cue for Passion"

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *December 20, 1940*

Cue for Passion, New Murder Play, Succeeds in Building a Fine Homicide That Arouses Suspense and Curiosity

By SIDNEY B. WHIPPLE

DURING the greater part of two acts of Cue for Passion, the new murder play at the Royale Theater, Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft have succeeded in building up a fine homicide, with fairly strong motives, considerable suspense and the happy quality of arousing curiosity and deep suspicions. Thereafter they have wandered, all too leisurely and with too much repetition, toward a conclusion that does not seem justified by the facts.

This note of dissatisfaction may be wholly personal on my part. I wanted to see the district attorney take a certain party away in the paddy wagon and charge her with murder. I wanted, in the words of one of the characters, to see her fry. And I can't tell you whom the authors actually pinned the killing on because we are honor bound, at the request of the management, not to divulge the details of the play.

The Messrs. Chodorov and Kraft have followed most of the rules in the construction of their mystery story. They have seen to it that the victim is not an endearing character and that there is no sense of personal loss in his demise. They have also seen to it that nearly all the victim's friends are the sort who, given proper motive, would be capable of the deed. It is in the manufacturing of the last act, however, and in extricating themselves from the tangled skein of motives and cross-motives, that they become, I insist, so unconvincing that if I were the D. A., I'd have the whole cast down in the Tombs until they came clean. Furthermore, with the aid of a rubber hose I would like to ask some more questions of the certain party mentioned above.

* * *

The victim in Cue for Passion is a writer who has turned actor, which is almost motive enough in itself for the murder. He is also a lecher, a dipsomaniac, a traitor to his friends and the possessor of the dirtiest disposition seen here since the neat disposal of the German consul in Margin for Error.

Since you cannot murder a man, even with that amount of justification, the authors have provided other motives which may be briefly checked against the names of the suspects:

Frances Chapman (wife) might have killed him because he threatened to divorce her and expose her to adultery charges which would have ruined her career as the editor of America's Greatest Magazine.

General Escobar (one of the wife's lovers) might have done the deed through a sense of chivalry.

Paul Jean Coulon (a playwright) ditto, ditto, ditto.

Marvin A. Mallet (fiance of the actress who has been too intimate with the writer-actor) would have been pleased to do it for revenge.

Vivienne Ames (the actress) was always fighting with him and you never can tell what these Hollywood stars are likely to do.

Those are the principal suspects, but there are other minor figures who drift suspiciously in and out of the hotel suite where the crime is committed.

Otto Preminger, directing the play for Richard Aldrich and Richard Myers, has done well by the first two acts. The third, it seemed to me, dragged interminably and thus dissipated much of the excitement created by the early scenes.

* * *

It is played by an excellent cast, with George Coulouris in the role of the hateful writer, and Gale Sondergaard disagreeably dynamic in the part of his brilliant and irritating wife. Doris Nolan's vivid beauty was well displayed in the character of the Hollywood siren, and Ralph Locke was outstanding in the part of a sardonic director, the part which, incidentally, contained some of the best of the Chodorov-Kraft lines.

A particular salute, however, should be sounded for two newcomers. They are a little ingenue named Claire Niesen, who made her Broadway debut in a sweet performance, and Oscar Karlweis, who comes from Vienna and who deserves every encouragement, for he is a real artist.

Although I can find fault with the conclusions—and particularly with the clumsiness of that third act—it is only fair to say that some of the characters are sharply and realistically drawn, and that many of the lines have a refreshing wit. But if I were district attorney I'd find plenty to hold the gang on—Escobar under the Sullivan law, Mrs. Chapman for conspiracy and subornation of perjury, Coulon on the Mann Act and the rest of them as material witnesses. I'd bust the case wide open again.

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *December 20, 1940*

'Cue for Passion' Is a Crime Melodrama Written by Edward Chodorov and H. S. Kraft

By BROOKS ATKINSON

AFTER writing a remarkably mordant opening act about a husband and wife who hate each other, the authors of "Cue for Passion" turn their play into an ordinary melodrama. The authors are Edward Chodorov, co-author of "Kind Lady," and H. S. Kraft, who wrote part of the book for a musical play several years ago. Their melodrama with a split personality opened at the Royale last evening.

Since Clare Booth played the same joke on her anti-Nazi drama, "Margin for Error," last season, much to the satisfaction of the town's play-goers, the authors are proceeding according to legal precedent and can plead not guilty as charged.

As evidence for their side they also offer a notably superior cast that includes Gale Sondergaard, George Coulouris and Doris Nolan in the chief parts; and Otto L. Preminger has put them through some telling paces. But counsel for this column's side wishes to observe for the record that after believing in the cutting horror of the first act he could not believe in the bogus horrors of the rest of the play. When a family row is well started counsel likes to see it finished in the good old family way.

* * *

In the first act a celebrated novelist is about to make his debut as an actor and his wife, editor of an influential weekly journal of opinion, is condescending to him, patronizing and generally objectionable. He is objectionable, too, which makes everything even. In the foreword the authors say, "All characters in the play are wholly imaginary and fictitious, and any resemblance to any person, living or dead, is entirely a coincidence." Since both characters are unspeakably poisonous, for heaven's sake let us take the authors at their word, which is easy. For they have described a whole cast of theatre, literary and public figures with sharp skill, not forgetting to put in some humor; and with the assistance of the demoniacal acting of Miss Sondergaard and Mr. Coulouris they have driven the point of the scene straight home with a couple of extra taps of hatred for evil measure.

But that's all there is of that; there isn't any more. For the rest of "Cue for Passion" is a run-of-the-mine mystery show with an artful finish. About two hours later, in the second act, the novelist is found dead from revolver shots in his hotel room. Who dun it? Wild Easter bunnies could not drag that information out of this column, which is under pledge to the management "not to divulge," etc. Whether or not the identity of the assailant is concealed legitimately is a point for scholars of crime to decide. But to this playgoer the long investigation of the mandarins of the law and the tantrums of the widow come as anti-climax after the searing drama of the first act.

* * *

Mr. Coulouris disappears into the upper air so early in the evening that it is impossible to quake before his malice after the first act. But Miss Sondergaard carries on with blistering ferocity all the way through. As a treacherous movie queen Miss Nolan is so ravishing that every one knows her cattiness is only expert play-acting and forgives her. Ralph Locke is pawkily amusing as a disillusioned play producer. As the timid and superfluous playwright, making ineffectual little dabs for attention, Oscar Karlweis is uncommonly funny. Claire Niesen plays the strategic part of a young visitor with a direct and modest sincerity that made a lot of friends for her last evening. Herbert Andrews has designed an inviting set. But the authors of "Cue for Passion" have played a cynical trick on their vivid first act.

"Retreat to Pleasure"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *December 18, 1940*

Three Men and a Girl And Nobody Happy in "Retreat"

"Retreat to Pleasure," comedy by Irwin Shaw. Produced by The Group Theatre at the Belasco Theatre, New York, Dec. 17, 1940.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

IT APPEARS to be Irwin Shaw's conviction that nobody is happy in this cockeyed world, nor likely to be if he continues to follow present-day conclusions.

In "Retreat to Pleasure," at the Belasco, he poses the case of three men—a rich idler, a rich heir to industry, a wasted idealist—all three of whom believe that if they could marry Edith Atwater they would immediately solve the problem of living.

But attractive as Miss Atwater unquestionably is, pictorially, and as active as is her unformed and groping mind, it is finally proved that she is not the answer to any one of the three problems.

And so Mr. Shaw, like an honest dramatist but a poor showman, runs out on his own quiz and lets his audience decide for itself.

It isn't wise to beg the question in the theatre. A dramatist should not only have convictions, but stand up for them.

Uncertain Quantities

Neither is it wise to waste convictions on people incapable of supporting them, or even absorbing them. None of these play folk seems real.

Take Leif Erickson, who is evidently Mr. Shaw's ideal, being a curious combination of fiery radical and beaten crusader—even he is not sure of what he expects of the world or how to work for it.

He knows that present systems are wrong, and that the men who practice them are pretty unhappy, but the slow processes of evolution seem to be his only hope for the future. Which, dramatically, is a weak out.

Miss Atwater, as completely as I could understand her character, was a pretty social worker who was a minor executive for WPA in Ohio the time 10,000 government dependents were taken off the rolls.

This so unsettled her thought that she was a pushover for a variety of emotions. She thought of marrying a sincere but puzzled manufacturer of valves. She considered playing around with a monied playboy. And she could not quite forget the strong young socialist with whom she used to drink cocktails, listen to Tchaikowsky and discuss the fate of the world.

Off to Miami

So she ups and runs away to Florida with the industrialist to ponder and make up her mind. No good. The playboy and the socialist (who had won a thousand dollars playing poker in a firehouse; imagine!) followed her and the footless discussion started all over again.

Well, it is a handsome Donald Oenslager production, anyway. And nicely cast. Miss Atwater, as intimated, is beautiful to look upon and, so far as her author permits, interesting to listen to. A good actress, honestly ambitious and well favored.

Mr. Erickson also possesses the virtues of earnestness and a determination to give any role, especially any role of social significance, the best he has to give.

Supporting these two are that excellent character actor, Hume Cronyn, playing the puzzled industrialist, and the upstanding and good looking John Emery as the playboy.

There are also a variety of short parts into which good actors also have been slipped—Helen Ford, playing an indefinitely characterized mother to the heroine; Florence Sundstrom, Dorothy Patten, Fred Stewart, Ruth Nelson and Art Smith, who are about the only members of the old Group Theatre troupe to show.

Nice audience, and a good deal of giggling.

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *December 18, 1940*

Irwin Shaw's "Retreat To Pleasure" Staged

By JOHN MASON BROWN

IT IS with a heavy heart that one is forced to report how seldom Irwin Shaw's "Retreat to Pleasure" succeeds in becoming the comedy which it aims at being.

To make matters worse, there are many agreeable people in the cast. Edith Atwater, Leif Erickson, John Emery, Hume Cronyn, Helen Ford, and George Matthews are all of them ingratiating performers. Not only does one want to like them but they make liking easy. Yet the stubborn fact remains that in the Group Theatre's first production of the winter they are all of them no more than agreeable passengers, imprisoned in a vehicle which chugs its way to an occasional laugh without ever hitting on more than one cylinder, and often goes into reverse.

Mr. Shaw—the Group's Mr. Shaw—is a promising playwright of whom much is, and will be, expected. Although "Siege," his drama about the Spanish War, had, like most nightmares, best be forgotten, Mr. Shaw's "Bury the Dead" has burned its way into remembrance. It was a diatribe against battle which showed the wounding indignation he can state in dramatic terms. "The Gentle People," the somewhat confusing allegory with which he followed this, proved, especially in its unforgettable scene in a steam bath, the humor he commands. But Mr. Shaw as the author of a comedy which does not know where it is going or why it has gone where it goes, is another matter. And this, unfortunately, is the Mr. Shaw who is heard from in "Retreat to Pleasure."

The troubles of the world—public and private—hover vulture-wise over the few genuinely gay moments of his latest script. The beat of their distant wings provides the evening with its one authentic, if invisible, interest. If these problems refuse ever to light it is because they are vultures that have been misled. They can find nothing on which to feed off the carrion of the plot over which they have been tempted to foregather.

Retreat From Pleasure

Three men in hot pursuit of a girl from New York to the unrealities of Florida are Mr. Shaw's concern. Nor are matters helped because the girl is a Vassar graduate, with an awakened social conscience, and the men are a bounder, a bantam capitalist, and a young liberal who is the most aggressive Mr. Fix-it to be seen hereabouts since Luka first wandered into "The Lower Depths."

The three men and the girl all sink ultimately in the leaky boat of Mr. Shaw's playwriting in spite of the fact that he spends the evening snatching life-belts out of their hands. Moreover in the third act even an optimistic audience goes down for the third time.

Miss Atwater is charming. Mr. Erickson is admirable. Mr. Cronyn demonstrates once again how excellent an actor he is. Mr. Emery contributes a helpful characterization. Miss Ford makes much of nothing. And Mr. Oenslager's settings are designed to house a worthy play. But it is only in the extraneous prize-fighter, both as performed by Mr. Matthews and as written by Mr. Shaw, that the comedy declares a real dividend. The rest of it is one long promissory note, always falling due and never being met.

"Retreat to Pleasure"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *December 18, 1940*

'Retreat to Pleasure,' a Slight Comedy, Is Offered at the Belasco Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

IN "Retreat to Pleasure," which opened last evening at the Belasco, Irwin Shaw tells a reasonably pleasant little anecdote about a girl who was loved by three men and ended up by marrying none of them. In passing, Mr. Shaw skims the surface of the world's tribulations and comments entertainingly enough on the minor foibles of the human breed. It is all most placid; a zephyr in a teacup.

His heroine is an animated girl who has been actress, newspaper reporter and WPA administrator in Ohio. Fleeing the responsibilities of the latter post, she returns to New York and love assails her from all directions. A windy young artist orates for her benefit, a solid business man woos her solemnly and a playboy wistfully pursues. When she goes to Florida in the second act she encounters an amusing prize fighter, a business man and his "niece," a reflective bartender, a comic lady drunk and a bathing girl with a French poodle. She is wooed continuously.

The rest of the play is devoted to the remarks of the artist, to whom all the characters listen intently and by whom many lives are changed. About this young man, played as charmingly as possible by Leif Erickson and named Peter Flower, Mr. Shaw and I must agree to differ. Mr. Shaw evidently regards him as the blossom of modern youth—a philosophical gypsy, carrying the truth like a torch. I, on the other hand, reluctantly consider him a loquacious bore, too callow for this modern world and maybe even too callow for the theater.

This view may reflect mere prejudice, but it obviously affects one's judgment of "Retreat to Pleasure." Even for those who like Mr. Flower, Mr. Shaw's play may well seem a static little comedy, entertaining chiefly because of its humorously conceived side issues. (The fighter is fun, for example, and the "niece" is an amusing little baggage until weltschmerz overcomes her.) Those annoyed by Mr. Flower may have some rather bad moments and sympathize strongly with the character who just wades out into the ocean, away from everything and, particularly, away from Mr. Flower.

Hume Cronyn, playing the smallest of the lady's admirers, gives a sharp, droll performance and pretty much runs away with the play. Helen Ford, Fred Stewart, George Matthews, Art Smith and Ruth Nelson are amusing in small parts; John Emery straightforward and honest in a larger one. Mr. Erickson is as charming as a man can well be under circumstances which seem to me adverse, and Miss Edith Atwater, as the much sought lady, is pleasant to look at and a graceful listener. She has to listen a lot.

'RETREAT TO PLEASURE'

A comedy in three acts by Irwin Shaw; directed by Harold Clurman; settings by Donald Oenslager; costumes by Paul duPont; presented at the Belasco Theater on December 17, 1940, by the Group Theater. The cast:

Frances Galligan	Helen Ford
Peter Flower	Leif Erickson
Chester Stack	John Emery
Lee Tatnall	Hume Cronyn
Norah Galligan	Edith Atwater
Mr. Ordway	Fred Stewart
Franklin Diederich	Art Smith
Lenore Trilling	Florence Sundstrom
Husband	Joseph F. Foley
Wife	Marie Adels
Eugene Makofske	George Matthews
Girl in Bathing Suit	Barbara Beech
Gretchen Tatnall	Dorothy Patten
Lady at the Bar	Ruth Nelson
Bartender	John McGovern

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *December 18, 1940*

Retreat to Pleasure Full of Airy, Good Humor

By SIDNEY B. WHIPPLE

YOU will be surprised to learn, I am sure, that Irwin Shaw apparently has deserted the proletarian drama to gambol for a while in the pleasanter pastures of light comedy. True, there is in his Retreat to Pleasure, the new Group Theater production at the Belasco, some banter about the present sorry state of the world. There is also some questioning by the younger generation about the deeper purpose of life. But these occasionally unhappy ponderings give way, as a general rule, to the more exciting pursuit of an elusive female.

Retreat to Pleasure, in other words, is totally different from anything Mr. Shaw has shown us before. It is light, airy, full of persiflage and good humor—a whimsical study of a group of personalities which, if not deeply etched, are amusingly drawn.

Mr. Shaw's composition is a square rather than a triangle. Three males compete for the one desirable woman. That all three of them eventually decide that the woman is not paramount desire, and that the curtain falls with the lady destined for continuing spinsterhood, provides a certain dramatic novelty, although I simply cannot believe that any man of sound mind could turn down anyone so lovely as Edith Atwater.

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The first of these suitors is Peter Flower, an agreeable vagabond with no discernible purpose in life other than to upset the plans of any other man who aspires to wed Norah Galligan (Miss Atwater). The second is a manufacturer of valves who has a New England conscience—an economic royalist. The third is a playboy to whom the most important event of his life (or at least the only thing he remembers of his entire career) is the Follies of 1923.

Miss Galligan, who wants to marry because she is tired out from working in a relief bureau, rather than because she is actually in love with anybody, flees to Florida with the manufacturer and is pursued by the extra males. Peter Flower, strictly through his persuasive conversational powers, inspires the valve man to give up his girl, retire from a business that may soon be turned into a munitions plant and go in for politics. He persuades the playboy that his life has been wasted. He induces Norah to marry him. And then, at the last moment, lets her down with the crushing announcement that he couldn't bear being cooped up in a little house with a woman. He wants, it seems, to see more of life before he settles down.

There is much pleasant chatter throughout the play, but it must be admitted that an idea that was not too robust to begin with is bound to grow a little tedious when it is drawn through three acts.

The acting, however, in great measure compensated for the lightness of the theme. Miss Atwater, as I have indicated, is one for whom not three men but hundreds should contend. Her performance was a sure and vivid as it was when she was the long-suffering secretary to the Man Who Came to Dinner.

• • •

Leif Erickson, as Peter Flower, played exuberantly and with evident enjoyment of a role that contains some difficulties. He avoided, for one thing, the danger of making Peter Flower's interference with the lives of other people an officious or even annoying trait. It cannot be easy to steal another man's girl and make him like it (and make the audience like it into the bargain), but he does it successfully.

Hume Cronyn, as the valve maker, does a human, persuasive and intelligent piece of work, his best, I think, in several years. John Emery, the playboy, gives the part an air of unsophisticated humor that is very engaging.

In the lesser roles, Helen Ford gave an amusing portrayal of a flighty mother, George Matthews was excellent as a dim-witted prize-fighter (rough, but oh, so gentle!) and Florence Sundstrom was effective as a sugar daddy's sugar-baby. Art Smith gave a finished performance in the role of a cheap whisky manufacturer, and the remainder of the cast filled in admirably. Harold Clurman directed a performance that flowed smoothly.